

Senate Bill 447  
Revise Victim Rights Laws  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
February 16, 2007  
Sally K. Hilander, Victim Information Specialist  
Montana Department of Corrections



Testimony:

Chairman Laslovich, Committee members, my name is Sally Hilander, victim information specialist for the Department of Corrections. I work in the Director's Office here in Helena.

One aspect of my job is to field about 200 calls per month on a toll-free hotline for victims of crime whose offenders are under DOC supervision, in prison and in community corrections programs such as probation or parole. I provide victims with custody status information they need to track the whereabouts of the offenders who harmed them. I provide about 20 referrals per week to public and private victim advocacy programs across Montana and elsewhere.

I also staff the DOC Crime Victims Advisory Council, whose voting members are victims and victim advocates appointed by the Director. The Council also includes staff from DOC prisons and other facilities, the Department of Justice, Board of Crime Control and Board of Pardons and Parole.

The victims who call my office often have compelling questions about the criminal proceedings involving their offenders. Some of them do not know the very basics of the judgments, plea bargains, and sentencing orders that directly affect their lives. They are surprised to learn that these documents are public. Fees for photocopying and postage that might seem incidental to most of us are prohibitive for many crime victims who have already incurred enormous costs associated with the crimes committed against them.

I believe many law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and courts in Montana provide excellent services to victims of crime, including copies of important public documents at little or no cost. This bill would assure that ALL crime victims in Montana receive the information they need to understand the criminal process.

The second provision of this bill provides that crime victims may have a victim advocate present during interviews with the defense. I cannot speak from

experience on this because I typically do not work directly with victims prior to sentencing.

However, the Crime Victims Advisory Council enthusiastically supports this Senate Bill 447.

Thank you for your support of Senate Bill 447. Thank you Senator Perry for your time and efforts in representing Montana's crime victims.

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